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A WORD of CAVTION

In all meekness,

To those SAINTS that usually meet at BLACK-FRYERS.

Chiefly from several particulars in their late Day of HUMILIATION.

1 Cor. 13. 5. *Charity doth not behave it self unseemly.*

To the dearly beloved in the Lord, the Saints that usually meet at Black-Fryers.

Beloved,

A Solemn Day of Fasting being set apart by the Church whereof I am a Member, for the same purpose as that whole day lately at Black-Fryers; I declared my apprehensions much to the same effect with these following particulars: which God setting upon the hearts of divers of our friends, they did earnestly desire me to communicate the same unto you; which hoping the Lord will give a blessing unto, I have accordingly done; though I trust not to exalt my self above you, for God knows how greatly I am failing myself in many particulars like unto these, and how exceedingly I come short in other things (I think) of the meanest of you: these are no words of course, as I can safely say, but from full conviction, I could not communicate those things to you without Printing, which is the more excusable, because what I here declare, is not any thing done in a corner; and it is necessary that those who differ from you being amongst your selves, should for the truths sake shew their dissent; yet I shall take care, that such as may be apt to rejoyce in your failings, may not have any of these Copies delivered to them. Dear friends I am, *One that desires sincerely to serve you in the Lord.*

THe present condition of the Saints was of old typed out by the people of *Israel*; They lately had their time of Bondage under those *Pharaoh's* that would not let them go to serve God (or meet together to worship him) otherwise then they pleased,

We are now as in the *Wildernes* where the *Israelites* continued till a new Generation sprung up, and all that came out of *Egypt*, except *Caleb* and *Ioshua* perished,

Caleb and *Ioshua* were men of singular spirits, which was the reason why they alone of that generation were preserved to possess the Land promised.

This their choiceness of spirit was expressed in their Zeal for God, in relation to the work of that Age, whereby they were not disheartened from persevering therein, either by their enemies abroad, or their cowardly friends at home.

This serveth to the great encouragement of those who find their hearts much taken off from minding their own things, to pray for, believe, and by all lawfull means pursue, those glorious ends which relate to the ruine of Gods enemies, and the deliverance of his people; and it also may discover the nakedness and shame of those pitiful Professors, whose low spirits center in the earth in such a day as this.

But because the defects of the most zealous are the most dangerous; because humility teaches to cast the first stone at our selves; and because self-judging is, I fear, of late too much neglected, I have laboured to search out, as with a candle, our own failings.

Though Zeal be contemptible to some wise Ones, it is the glory of a Saint; and yet there is no temper so pernicious, if it be not well qualified.

There are 7 necessary Qualifications in Zeal; it must be a Well-grounded, Sincere, Charitable, Self-humbling, Self-denying, well Proportioned and World convincing Zeal; Let us therefore humbly submit to consider,

1. Whether our Zeal be very well grounded; many of our late proceedings have been such, as though we have made a shift to agree in them, yet it is upon very different grounds; for that which one takes up to satisfy himself, another looks upon as invalid, and flies, as he thinks to some better hold; yet usually those of one side will defend the way.



of their own leaders; and those of another side will do the like to their leaders, and both as much dislike their opposites; which if we did follow truth and not men, could not be.

The Jews had a zeal, but not according to knowledge; The Corinthians were rather for *Paul*, *Apollo*, or *Cephas*, then Christ; The Galatians would have plucked out their eyes for him that afterwards was their enemy for speaking truth: But where are the Bereans, that would not take things upon trust, though from the Apostles, though workers of Miracles, though guided by an infallible spirit; though superlative in Godliness, and leaders of a Party like themselves; how easily would such workers of Miracles, I fear, lead such as we about?

It may be if the Chief amongst us should press these following particulars, they would not be slighted; but most God needs use our instruments; what if he will not humour us? doth he judge of men as we? Nay, doth he not use to send those which men least regard; as he did *Samuel* (whilest but a Novice) to the old Prophet *Eli*?

2. As to Sincerity; I am confident your Zeal is without base ends, which I am much assured God doth exceedingly accept; But,

3. Consider, whether it might not be more Charitable; and that first in relation to our Friends. To complain against others, and that such as are, first, Without. 1^{ly}, Magistrates; 2^{ly}, Friends; before those who are apt to take our parts; and that when soul-searching and self-humbling is onely seasonable, (as especially in days of publick Humiliation;) consider whether it doth not, first, much exasperate, 1^{ly}, much feed our own corruptions; 2^{ly}, require much grace in Offenders, to submit to such rebukes; 3^{ly}, Argue our Fasting is much to strife and debate.

But if our design be simply to win others (as Charity requires) we should exhort them privately, much humble our selves therein; encourage what we find good in them; and rather publish our own shame then theirs: This is the way to overcome evil with good; and to shew our selves right Christians indeed.

If this will not serve, Charity requires,

1. We should fear that our selves may be out as well as they; or 2^{ly}, that they not being convinced, are rather of weakness then wilfulness.

And if they be such as are without, though not Magistrates, then in case they judge our Wisdom Folly, we must submit to them.

For if in this case we do not acquiesce, but cry out on them, as sup-

pose, for treating with the Dutch; for not removing *y*thence, not sending an Army to *France*, and what else we mislike; we make our selves Magistrates, and deny their power, or else what do those Scriptures signify which inform us, That every soul must be subject to the Higher Powers; that the Powers that are, are ordained of God; that we must submit to every Ordinance of man for the Lords sake: That those are very presumptuous and self-willed, who despise Government, speak evil of Dignities, and sport with such things without fear: And indeed, if every man must be Judge in such Cases, there can be no end of strife, confusion, and massacre.

2. In relation to our Enemies, some speak as if we might not Treat with them, except we had ground to believe they would cordially assist in carrying on the Work of Christ; if so, we make other men serve Christ how we please, or else deprive them of their lives and estates.

Now if Pastors, and much less other Saints, may not thus Lord it over their fellow Members, surely they may not do it over those that are without.

It is objected that they are enemies not to us, but to Christ.

I Answer; if they be willing to do us no harm, what Commission have we to cut their throats because we judge them enemies to Christ?

Again; Wherein are the Dutch enemies to Christ, more then, first, most other Nations; 2^{ly}, most of our own Neighbours; or 3^{ly}, most of our own Posterity; and shall we destroy all these, though they be willing to live at peace with us, without giving them time to repent?

And yet (who would think it) it is pleaded further, that the Jews might not make peace with the inhabitants of *Canaan*, whose example we are to follow.

Ans. Their proceedings herein first related meerly to those nations, and not to all the world. 2^{ly}, were by the immediate direction of him who knew that the sins of that people were then ripe. 3. Follow this rule, and we must rob our neighbours as they did the Egyptians; nay destroy all the Scots and Cavaliers as they did their subdued enemies: but I hope that without such immediate direction as they had, we shall not with *Abraham*, attempt to kill our sons, or thus with the Jews to rob the Egyptians; or destroy our conquered enemies; or do Gods work contrary to his revealed will, and against nature.

But what if Gods time be come for destroying his enemies, shall we never go about that work?

Alas, what a pitifull argument is here:

1. If Gods time be come, we may seek peace according to the known rule, but God will harden the heart of *Pharaoh*.

2. If the time be come for destroying Gods enemies; yet it is onely those that are incorrigible disturbers of his worship or people, for others must be spared in hope of their repentance, or else what would become of posterity being all born enemies to God; and how else could the earth (that is men unconverted) help the Woman, that is the Church, in destroying Gods enemies,

3. The time for delivering the Israelites and destroying of *Pharaoh* was come; and yet *Moses* was sent not faintly to treat with *Pharaoh*, to let them go peaceably; but seven times to repeat and urge his solicitations, backed with the strongest motives (ten heavy Plagues) to work upon him, and yet all would not serve the turn.

By such effectual indeavours for peace, (as then, so now) the obstinacy of the enemy would be discovered, which God in these cases aims at, as that without which they are not so much left without excuse; coals of fire are not heaped upon their heads; God hath not so much glory, the truth so much advantage, our friends cannot be so unanimous, cannot destroy others, and lose their own lives in the war; without regret of conscience; our light doth not shine before men that they may see our good works; consequently, the thus exalting of the Saints doth not make them as a candle upon a hill to give light unto the world; and therefore is to no purpose; and worse, will prove a stumbling block in the way of the worlds conversion, now very unseasonable.

For such like reasons as these God himself in the Gospel doth not onely treat with, but beseech those his enemies to be reconciled to him, whose destruction he knows is at hand; and therefore so must we though we knew it to be so, and much more if we do not know but God may give them repentance.

Concerning war and peace with other nations, I think the received *Maximes* are these; that if any people would deprive us of our freedom either in relation to religion or civil rights, we may defend our selves, but if they are willing to live peaceably by us, we may not impose upon them from any pretence of religion or otherwise, no more than they upon us.

Else we reject that of our Saviour, to do as we would be done unto; whereas Christians must do something more towards peace than other men, *viz.* do good for evill even to our enemies, or else saith Christ, what do you more then the Publicans.

Why

Why, such Scriptures as these should be like an Almanack, now out of date, I cannot imagine, except we may upon I know not what suppositions, contradict the plain laws both of scripture and nature, without any warrant from God.

4. Consider whether our zeal might not be more humble, when our selves can scarce agree upon our own proceedings, when we seem to contradict both scripture and nature, when other humble Christians do apprehend it to be so; doth not want of much self jealousy in this case argue some want of humility.

If we think we stand, and yet do not take heed lest we fall; if we stand by faith, and yet are high minded, and do not fear; if we are not deeply sensible of the unsearchable deceits of our own hearts as well as other mens; if we be too confident that we our selves are a guide to the blind, and a light to them that sit in darknesse; if we be those that you cannot caution, but you judge Gods spirit in them (intitling that stile to all, without fear and trembling;) if we be busie in other mens matters, and that after an unseemly manner; if we be little exercised in self-abasing, and that even in daies of solemn humiliation; if we suspect not these things in our selves, whilst innumerable other humble Christians are agreed that we come very near them, may it not possibly be from some want of humility?

Again, if there be delusions, strong delusions, and that amongst the Saints; and if in strong delusions the evidence seems clear, and yet is false; alas why may not we as well as others be subject to them; are we of all Saints the onely *Abrahams* from whom God will not hide his secrets? brethren do not think you have no need of more humility.

5. Consider whether our zeal might not be more self denying; which in this our day calleth hard upon us to manifest.

1. A greater contempt of this world; never was there more profession, nor any professors that talked more then we; now we that blame others so highly, for not following God closely, must do something singular in that, which authority will not hinder us from, or else I fear we shall but mock God, and give occasion to men to suspect all religion.

2. Self-denying zeal calls hard upon us for an unwearied pursuit of publick ends; yea though others be promoted and we slighted; to persevere in doing good, though we know this in likelihood must be the issue is very hard; but to do it also without rancor is more difficult; but exceeding Noble, and futable to this our day.

3. It requires an appearing for truth against our own party: our carnal

earthly hearts will tell us, that hereby we shall seem to them to be men unsound, weak in judgment, dark to the present dispensations of another party, disaffected to the Saints; not fit to be trusted with their secrets, or retained in their choicest affection, or the like.

I fear many of us give too much way to these arguments by reason of our great siding and part taking, upon such sandy grounds.

What Dwarfs then are we in religion, to be afraid of meer words or thoughts, when the primitive Saints triumphed over all the horrid cruelties that inhumanity could invent; let us rather imitate the courage of *Caleb and Joshua*, without which we cannot be through paced for God in this glorious day of his.

6. Consider whether our zeal might not be better proportioned, we put much weight in reforming the names of daies, places, and things, and some expresse much zeal against the crosse in arms; and we generally spend as much time in long prayers as ever the Pharisees could. This (or some of it) we ought to have done, but not to have greatest things undone, lest our zeal be too much like theirs.

But what can we do without Authority?

Ans. What hinders, but that we and the truly zealous of the House, may do as *Iob*, search out the causes we know not, and sollicite for them, or maintain those that shall.

Hereby we should be Patrons of the Commons, whereas in reality whilest others might be so called; which would much become Christians; otherwise, if we had a Parliament of our own chusing, it might be as bad as now.

If we would do thus; (and manage our affairs therein with much humility,) we might find work enough whereby to expresse true Zeal without offence, to the honour of God, the Gospel, the Godly, and the Nation.

And by the way, there is one thing which is the Root of almost all our present Oppressions, which we might do well to Petition against; and that is, That private men can perjure, and obtain Justice one against another; but when one mans Interest, though never so just, comes in competition with the State, he finds a hard tug of it.

What multitudes of people groan I fear under this oppression; and why should the people be oppressed for the State, which signifies nothing but Tyranny, if it be not to relieve the people. The ground of this is first, that particular men may be wronged by Officers, with much less danger then the State,

2. That those gain most power who pretend to be greatest husbands for the State.

Lastly, Consider whether our zeal might not be more convincing. The Godly party are the salt of the earth, and since their goodness cannot extend to God, one chief end of their zeal is to make religion have a sweet savour amongst men. Example prevails more then much preaching, and leaves gain-sayers without excuse; hence it is, that charity doth not behave it self unceasingly.

To go in a hurry of zeal, without using the wisdom of the Serpent to win souls, as well as the innocency of the Dove, is blame worthy; there is a holy guile by which the Apostle caught the Corinthians. But I fear if our zeal be scarce well grounded, scarce charitable, scarce humble, scarce self-denying, scarce well proportioned, it cannot be a world convincing zeal, but will rather become such a stumbling block as men must have much grace to dare not offend with the truth for our sakes. And if so then I am sure all our sins will hinder much more then further the cause of Christ, which thus in great measure they do, is not my fear alone; but I observe that very many of those humble and spiritual Christians, (not dissented to the late proceedings) are of the same mind.

Now the Lord open your eyes to consider of these things, and grant that you may not be wise in your own conceits.



FINIS.

And thus I have done. I have endeavored to present unto you a plain and unadorned picture of the state of the Church of England, as it is at this present time. I have not sought to flatter, nor to offend; but to speak the truth as it is, and as I have seen it. I have also sought to show the reasons of the things which I have said, and to offer such counsel as I have thought fit. I leave it to your wisdom and discretion to consider of these things, and to do as you shall see good. I am, Sir, your most humble servant.